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SUBJECT: PAKTIKA SUPER SHURA IS A SUPER SUCCESS

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: District shura and government leaders from throughout Paktika province met in the provincial capital, Sharana, for three days in a "super shura" (gathering of elders). The shura was a huge success with a large number of attendees from diverse backgrounds, energetic debates, and creative solutions to provincial challenges. The event was a historic meeting of all of the tribal groups present in the province along with Members of Parliament (MPs) and several Kabul-based representatives from key ministries. More than 600 Afghans attended to discuss the challenges facing Paktika and to propose a comprehensive slate of solutions requiring action from the central government and from provincial and tribal leaders.

Attendees from the Entire Province and Diverse Backgrounds

¶2. (U) Paktika Governor Muhammad Akram Khpalwak assembled a three-day province-wide shura that included representatives from all 23 district shuras (19 official districts and four self-proclaimed) and 22 of 23 District Administrators. The Governor and the Provincial Council (PC) secured participation from all major tribal groups, GIROA officials, and from the Kuchi (a nomadic tribe). Two of Paktika's eight MPs, the Minister for Communications and Information Technology, and several representatives from the Ministries of Health, Education, Water and Energy, and Rural Rehabilitation and Development attended the final day. The International Community footprint was light, limited largely to logistics and security support. Participants divided into five working groups to address governance, security, development, education and tribal reconciliation issues. Each group was made up of representatives from all of the 23 district shuras.

The Working Groups' Conclusions

¶3. (U) The working groups' solutions centered on a few key themes. First, provincial leaders recognized the dearth of educated and professional staff at all levels of government, particularly the health, education and security sectors. Leaders called on the GIROA to recruit and post teachers to Paktika. They requested that the ministries adopt a more flexible approach when recruiting people to work in the province and suggested both financial incentives and the provision of secure housing as key recruitment tools. Second, participants focused on the need to delegate financing for development projects to the ministries' line directors in Sharana as a way to control the types of

projects funded and the selection of contractors. The shura agreed that contracting local communities for the building of smaller projects was the preferred approach. Finally, leaders agreed that the district shuras should bear additional responsibilities for the recruitment of Afghan National Security Forces, the protection of construction and development projects, and the provision of labor and materials to contribute to the future of the province.

14. (U) On the final day of the shura, each working group presented its findings to a plenary session of about 600 people. Key conclusions will be presented to the relevant ministries. Governor Khpalwak opened the final session with a rousing speech in which he minced no words in expressing his frustration over the failure of the central government to support his province. He specifically singled out the Ministry of Health for failing to remove JACK, a local NGO operating one-third of the clinics in the province and whose performance has consistently been rated as poor by local officials.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: The shura demonstrated that Governor Khpalwak enjoys broad support from both district leaders and all of Paktika's tribes. It also showed that local shuras are prepared to assume a greater role in the security and development of the province if the central government does its part by providing financial resources and expertise. Shuras of this type are a tradition in the Pashtun areas, and, as this "super shura" demonstrated, can be an effective means to achieve consensus and link the people to the district, provincial and national government.
WOOD